

Academic Credit for Prior Learning

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Adult Learners and Prior Learning

“More and more adults are looking for ways to increase their marketability and expand their skills in an effort to retain their current jobs, find employment, and compete for higher-paying positions. Many adults are looking to their local colleges and universities to deliver quality education and training in a timely manner. But, ‘for too many adults who want to earn postsecondary credentials, the traditional structure and organization of higher education pose significant barriers to access and, particularly, to persistence and success.’ “”¹

¹ Jobs for the Future. Adult Learners in Higher Education: Barriers to Success and Strategies to Improve Results (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Policy Development and Research, March 2007).

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

- Evaluation of knowledge gained by “non-academic” learning
- Advocates for Prior Learning believe:
 - significant link between persistence to degree completion and PLA
 - PLA assists students to earn credit faster less expensively.
- Types of Credit for Lifelong Learning
 - Testing
 - Evaluated for Credit
 - Prior Learning Assessment

What's in a Name?

- Credit for Prior Learning
- Experiential Learning
- Prior Learning Assessment
- Life Experience Credit
- Non-Traditional Credit

..... Every institution handles it differently

Credit for Prior Learning

- Limits on number of credit hours
- When credits will be transcribed
- Residency issues
- Ways to Evaluate Prior Learning
 - Portfolio submission
 - Course which results in creation of portfolio
 - Interview

CAEL - The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning

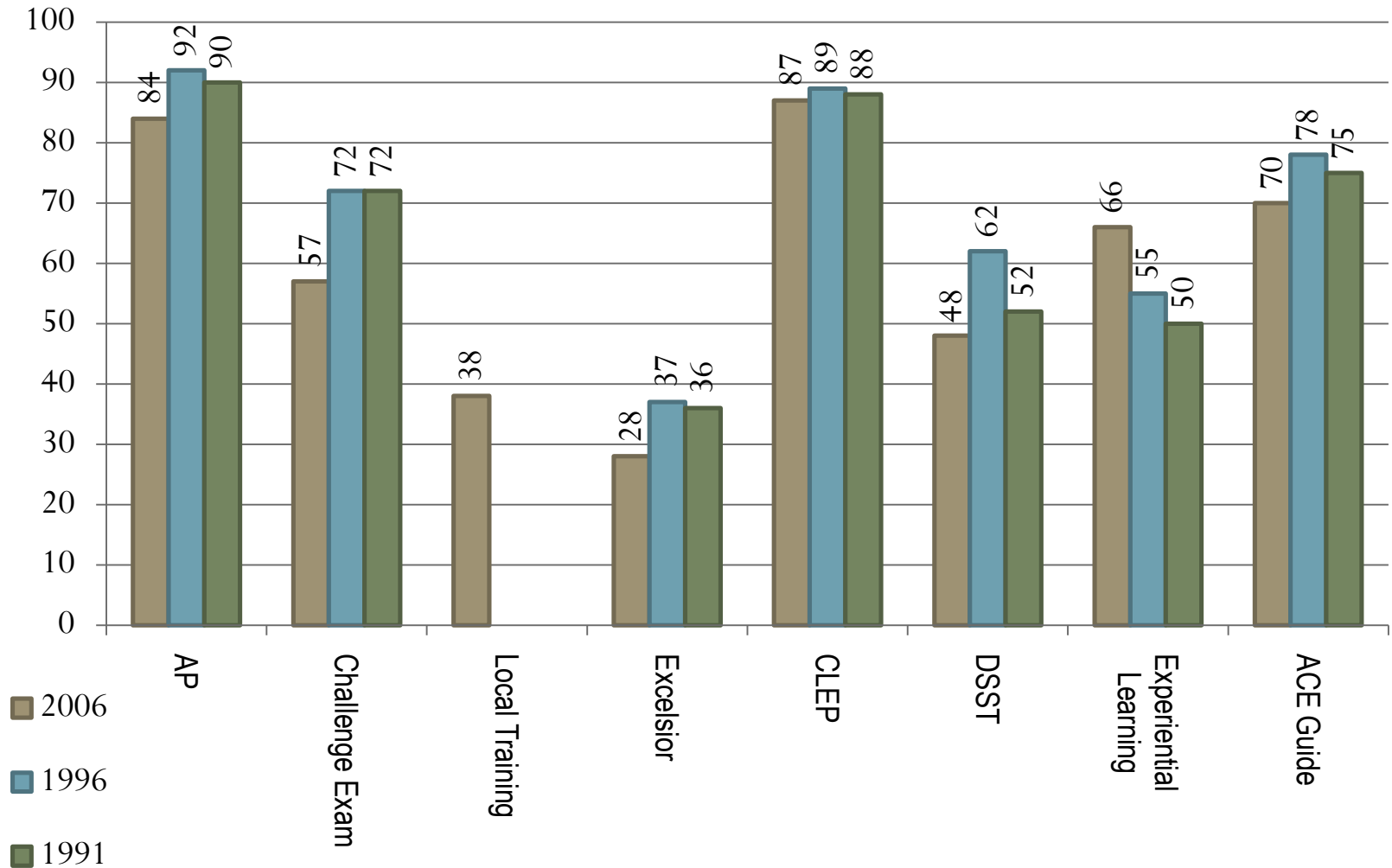
- Founded in 1974
- National, non-profit organization
- Mission is to expand learning opportunities for adults.
- Works to remove barriers to learning opportunities
- Identifies and disseminates effective practices
- Delivers value-added services

http://www.cael.org/colleges_universities.htm

2006 CAEL Survey

- Institutions accept PLA methods such as CLEP Exams and AP Exams
- The least used methods were Excelsior Exams and Local Training
- Compared to data from 1991 and 1996 surveys acceptance of Experiential Learning Assessments is becoming slightly more common
 - 66% in 2006
 - 55% in 1996
 - 50% in 1991
- Challenge Exams may be becoming less common
 - 56% in 2006
 - 72% in previous years

CAEL survey results



2009 CAEL Study

- 2009 CAEL research study focusing on PLA and adult student outcomes. Funded by Lumina Foundation for Education who is working to ensure that 50 percent of Americans are college educated by 2025
- Examined records of 62,475 students at 48 institutions in US and a few in Canada.
 - Adults students (25 yrs or above)
 - Matriculated in 2001-2002.
 - Followed academic progress for 7 years.

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/03/01/prior>

http://www.cael.org/pdf/PLA_Fueling-the-Race.pdf

CAEL 2009 Study Findings

- Prior Learning Assessed students had better academic outcomes compared with non-PLA students.
 - Successful and highly motivated students seek various avenues to earn credit – therefore, these students may already hold the traits of students who are moving forward in degree completion.
 - Credit for prior learning in and of itself is positive influence on the self-esteem and self-confidence. It validates the student's existing skills and knowledge.

CAEL 2009 Study Findings

- PLA students have higher degree-earning rates
 - 56% earned a post secondary degree within seven years, while only 21% of non-PLA students did so.
 - 43% bachelors compared to 15% for non-PLA
 - 13% associates compared to 6% non-PLA
- PLA students had better graduation rates regardless of:
 - institutional size or level or control
 - student's academic ability or GPA
 - student's age, gender, race/ethnicity
 - financial aid recipient

CAEL 2009 Study Findings

- Ways Prior Learning Credit is used:
 - To meet elective requirements (94%)
 - To meet general education requirements (88%)
 - To meet program/major requirements (79%)
 - To meet advanced standing (69%)
 - To waive prerequisites (67%)

Military students

- Military status did not have higher graduation rates than non-PLA students with military status – exception to the findings
 - Not surprising – as there are no “non-PLA students with military status”. This particular population of students earns these credits with no extra effort....they are no more motivated than any other student based strictly on military credit.
- http://www.cael.org/pdf/PLA_Fueling-the-Race.pdf

CAEL Online Portal – “Learning Counts”

- A joint project of CAEL, the American Council on Education, and the College Board
- Created an online portal where adult students can have "prior learning" assessed
- Goal is:
 - “....to help solve a growing national problem by increasing the number of postsecondary credentials and degrees awarded in this country. Increase access to PLA opportunities on a national scale while modeling exemplary practice in portfolio-based PLA.” (Learningcounts.org)
 - Using independent faculty evaluators to facilitate the acceptance of that work by colleges.
 - Establishing an evaluation assessment via a online portal

CAEL Online Portal – “Learning Counts”

- **Pilot Project**
- **Assessing student portfolios**
- Participating adults take an online portfolio development course (\$500)
 - 500 tuition includes portfolio development and required textbook
 - 6-week online course
 - Teaches student the process and how to document learning
- Fees assessed based on number of credits requested for review
 - 1-6 UG credits - \$250
 - 7-13 UG credits - \$500
 - 14-20 UG credits - \$750
- ACE would transcript this credit (CAEL 100)
 - Same transcript service it already does with military and corporate training according to CAEL's CEO Pam Tate

Columbia College, as an example

- CC calls the broader category non-traditional (NT) credit (maximum of 60 hours accepted)
- This NT credit is made up of:
 - Military credit, CLEP, DSST, Excelsior, etc.
 - ACE credit
 - Institutional credit
 - Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) - Create a portfolio that exhibits the connection between the MLOs and outside learning.
 - Credit for police academies, corporate training, etc.
 - We no longer offer the challenge exam (test-out) option as we have found that exams like CLEP are filling that need for our students.

Credit for Prior Learning (CPL)

- Faculty assess learning acquired outside college or university settings
 - Employment
 - Community
 - Volunteer
- The focus is on the learning that takes place in these experiences – not the experiences themselves.
- Faculty make a determination on whether to recommend college-level credits.

Portfolio Preparation

Each course has it's own portfolio (or section of portfolio, if appropriate)

- Cover Page
 - One page summary of learning that is proposed for credit
- Chronological Record (Resume)
 - Lists all jobs held, including volunteer. Note duties, skills and expertise used in performing job tasks.
- Life Experiences
 - List community/religious activities, club/organization memberships, training programs or non-credit courses, hobbies/recreation, cultural pursuits, independent research

Portfolio Preparation

- Goal Statement – one page in length
 - Discussion of how educational goals relate to professional life and personal goals.
- Narrative (key component)
 - Student discusses what learning they have that equates to course content.
- Documentation
 - Letters of verification
 - Employers, Supervisors, voluntary agency, etc.
 - Job descriptions, job evaluations and military evaluations
 - Sample work
 - Education and award certificates/licenses

Portfolio Preparation

- Subjects and Course Description
 - Review of course descriptions to determine what course(s) appear to be in line with learning they have acquired.
 - Review the course syllabi for the course(s) to determine what the major learning outcomes (MLOs) are of the course.
 - Determine if the MLOs are covered, in large part, by the outside learning.
 - Faculty with content expertise reviews the portfolio and determines what, if any, academic credit may be awarded for the outside learning.

Portfolio Preparation

- Submit two forms
 - Memorandum of Understanding
 - Outlines expectations and understanding of process
 - Official request for a review
- Fee payment
 - Fee for portfolio review; no additional fee for credit awarded
 - This removes the idea of “paying for credit” - student pays for review of learning experiences

Any Questions – Comments?

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